



THE SIGNPOST

First Quarter 2023

President's Message:

We hope the recent storms have not impacted the parks you protect too badly, and you are staying safe and relatively dry.

2023 Conference

Time is running out to [register for our conference](#) at Rush Creek Lodge. The last day to register without a late fee is February 1st. Make sure to book your room by February 5th to get the conference rate of \$125 per night (promo code is PRAC1). You will find registration information and the registration form, as well as the most up to date 2023 conference schedule of events. We have many great sessions planned and will be rolling out our revised Ranger Certification Program. Hope to see you there.

Membership Renewal

Have you [renewed your membership](#) yet? This is important in supporting PRAC, ensuring you get the membership registration fee at the conference, remain signed up for access to PRACnet, continue to receive The Signpost and get access to our new pro-rate deals. If you're not sure of your status please email our hardworking office manager, Betsy Anderson office@calranger.org.

Updated Webpage

Our webmaster, Jeff Price, has updated [our website](#). When you get a chance take a look. Thank you, Jeff, for completing this major project for us!



The Signpost

If you are interested in contributing an article for the next issues of The Signpost the deadline is April 15, 2023. We'd love to hear from you and let your fellow rangers know something new, helpful, or interesting. Check out the last issue [here](#).

President,
Matt Cerkel

Interview with UC Davis Wildlife Biologist Lina Vu

By Candi Hubert, PRAC Vice President

I met Lina Vu, UC Davis wildlife biologist while she was assigned to Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park to focus on mountain lions and their habits. Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park has had a history of interactions between the public and mountain lions for many years. It's been interesting to have a mountain lion study in the park and to work with the biologists.



How did you become interested in mountain lions?

I've always loved domestic animals, especially dogs, and wanted to get a chance to work



with them. I checked out the internship list at my school (UC Santa Cruz, GO SLUGS!) and out of all the options, the Santa Cruz Puma Project sounded cool and involved working with dogs to look for signs of lions. I was lucky enough to meet a puma during my internship. He ran off and jumped a fence as tall as a horse right in front of me! Unfortunately, he was killed shortly after, legally with a depredation permit. It really motivated me to keep working with wild animals and making it possible for them to live among humans.

What do you find most interesting as a biologist working with these animals in the field?

My workdays are never the same – we had a young male lion wandering people’s yards right around Christmas. I’ve stayed up late nights waiting for them to enter our traps. With other times, like this rainy season, it stays quiet, and I mostly have office work to catch up on.

What did you learn from this data about the mountain lions in Whiting Ranch?

We placed approximately 30 cameras around the park that would take 3 photos every time the motion sensor was triggered. The park is utilized heavily by humans during daytime hours, and wildlife would find opportunities to use the same trails at night or off-human hours because of rainy days or park closure. We are still working on the full analysis to work out the effect of humans on wildlife in the park.

Was there any part of the study that surprised you?

Some of the lions that come to a park like Whiting in the Orange County foothills end up by Corona or Camp Pendleton or even beyond. It seems like the park is a corridor for young males passing through and territorial lions that include Whiting in their large home ranges. One lion that grew up near Whiting was crossing the 60 up by Diamond Bar. It was a long drive for me, so imagine walking that distance as a young teenager.

How have local hobbyists who sometimes contribute photos of mountain lions helped in the study?

There are times where images from local photographers provide valuable data to the project. Their high-resolution cameras allow observation of injuries or weight loss/gain without direct contact. However, we highly discourage trespassing and other activities that could disrupt lion behavior or hurt our relationship with the landowners.

What educational tips would you give the public in interacting with mountains lions?

I carry bear spray when hiking alone. I recommend doing the same or hiking in a group when going into lion habitat. Generally, wildlife will hear you coming and actively avoid you. If you run into a mountain lion, you can yell or throw things at it to scare it off. Don’t act like prey and immediately run away. Do NOT attempt to get closer for cool

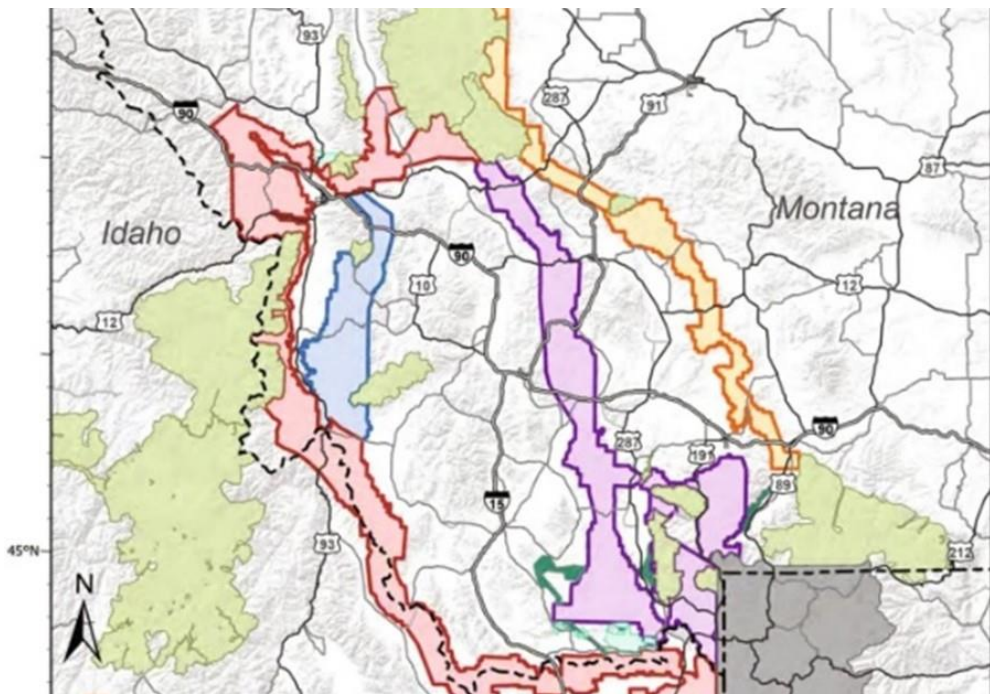


pictures please.

How do you compare Whiting Ranch to other areas where you studied mountain lions?
Whiting Ranch has a tremendous human presence compared to more remote areas, yet wildlife finds space to hunt and breed and survive. I've worked in middle of nowhere places like Burns, Oregon so it is nice to be able to take a lunch break at In-N-Out compared to having to drive an hour out to the nearest grocery store.

What do you still want to learn about mountain lions?
The biggest mystery for me involves lion relationships and reproduction. I've captured videos male and female lions hanging out, pregnant lions, and females with kittens. Sometimes, females hang out with multiple males before they're pregnant, so we are developing techniques to gather genetic material from the kittens without being too intrusive. Sometimes, a female with a few kittens will end up alone a few weeks later and we don't have any answers to why. I want to learn more about kitten survival and what would help these females in raising their young.

New study highlights the importance of regional connectivity **by Michael Warner, Region 2 Director**

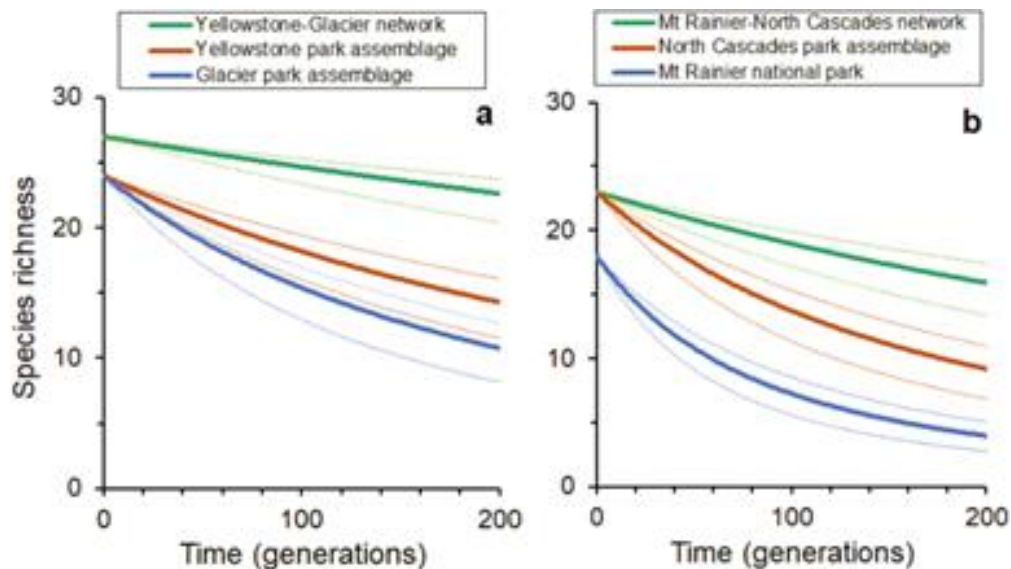


Earlier this week (on January 11th) researchers from the Natural History Museum of Utah and a few other universities presented a research paper on conservation of



medium and large mammals within National Park lands vs the larger proposed regional corridors. Its findings, while not shocking to parks and conservation workers, helps put some actual numbers on the difference in their effectiveness.

The authors studied four national park sites; Glacier, Yellowstone, Mount Rainer, and North Cascades National Parks. They also simulated a proposed wildlife corridor between Mount Rainer and North Cascades along with one between Yellowstone and Glacier. What they found was that the regional corridors, with anthropogenic barriers (fences & highways) removed or mitigated for would increase the persistence of medium to large mammal species by a factor of 4.3 or roughly 305 generations in the Mount Rainer – North Cascades and 682 Generations in the Glacier – Yellowstone corridor.



One of the authors, William Newmark stated to KSL, a Salt Lake City news station that “regional connectivity among western North America national parks could serve as an important "template" for landscape-scale conservation in the 21st century”. Furthermore, he and the report noted that “While it has been documented that ecological corridor enhance population persistence of species, most of these studies have been small-scale experiments. There are few assessments of the value of ecological linkages at large spatial scales.”

If you are interested in reading more about this study, you can find it at <https://www.nature.com/srep/> by searching the title: **Enhanced regional connectivity between western North American national parks will increase persistence of mammal species diversity** or for online viewers of this newsletter you can follow the direct link : [HERE](#)



Under the Flat Hat

By Matt Cerkel, President



This year marks my 28th anniversary of becoming a park ranger, and for my entire career there have been two related points of discussion about the park ranger profession. The first is what is the role of the park ranger? The second is do we need revise Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 4022, which defines that within California park rangers are peace officers, except as exempted?

PRC 4022 states:

“4022. (a) The titles of ranger, park ranger, and forest ranger, and derivations thereof, may only be used by persons who are peace officers under Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 830) of Title 3 of Part 2 of the Penal Code, employees of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or employees of the Department of Parks and Recreation classified as State Park Ranger (Permanent Intermittent). Any person, other than a peace officer or employee of the Department of Parks and Recreation, as described in this section, or employee of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, who willfully wears, exhibits, or uses any authorized badge, insignia, emblem, device, label, title, or card of a ranger, park ranger, forest ranger, or a derivation thereof, to identify the person as a ranger, park ranger, or forest ranger, or who willfully wears, exhibits, or uses any badge, insignia, emblem, device, label, title, or card of a ranger, park ranger, or forest ranger, which so resembles the authorized version that it would



deceive an ordinary, reasonable person into believing that it is authorized for the use of a ranger, park ranger, or forest ranger, is guilty of an infraction.

(b) Subdivision (a) does not apply to positions and titles of agencies of the United States government or to any local agency which is officially using any title specified in subdivision (a) as of January 1, 1990.

In the early 2000s there was an effort to eliminate the “grandfather clause” from PRC 4022 but it was not successful. The need for PRC 4022 continues to be debated within the California park ranger community, and it may be time to modify PRC 4022.

My proposed revision would change who PRC 4022 applies to. Since there are no provisions in any state codes besides PRC 4022 authorizing “rangers” or “forest rangers” as peace officers, and there are numerous state codes that to apply to “park rangers” with peace officer and public safety duties, why not change PRC 4022 to apply only to park rangers? That way non-sworn rangers can remain rangers, but across the state all park rangers would be sworn peace officers. It seems like a good compromise and over time the ranger profession could continue to professionalize, but those in non-sworn positions can use the proud title of ranger.

Under my proposal PRC 4022 would state the following:

“4022. (a) The titles of park ranger, may only be used by persons who are peace officers under Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 830) of Title 3 of Part 2 of the Penal Code. Any person, other than a peace officer, who willfully wears, exhibits, or uses any authorized badge, insignia, emblem, device, label, title, or card of a park ranger, to identify the person as a park ranger, or who willfully wears, exhibits, or uses any badge, insignia, emblem, device, label, title, or card of a park ranger, which so resembles the authorized version that it would deceive an ordinary, reasonable person into believing that it is authorized for the use of a park ranger, is guilty of a misdemeanor.” (b) Subdivision (a) does not apply to positions and titles of agencies of the United States government.

I would also consider adding a statewide training standard for all new park rangers. The PRAC Park Ranger Certification Program, which is in the final stages of its revision would be a good model for these proposed training requirements. To learn more about PRAC’s certification program click [here](#).



At the heart of PRAC's certification standard is required training and experience in these areas:

1. Interpretation
2. Resource Management
3. Maintenance & Operations (Park Stewardship)
4. Fire Management
5. Emergency Medical Services
6. Law Enforcement

There now a [Ranger Academy](#) that provides much of this training. Perhaps this academy will be the first step towards a POST recognized Ranger Academy and even POST Ranger Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced certificates. Adding a basic training requirement to PRC 4022 could make this happen and finally allow for true statewide professional standards for all park rangers under PRC 4022.

My proposed changes to 4022 would help professionalize the park ranger profession in California and establish a statewide standard for park rangers. It would also allow non-sworn rangers to continue to use the proud ranger title without running afoul of PRC 4022. What do you think? I'd like to know.





Park Rangers Association of California-The Signpost



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Thanks for reading! Please [let us know](#) if you have ideas for what you would like to see in future issues of *The Signpost*.